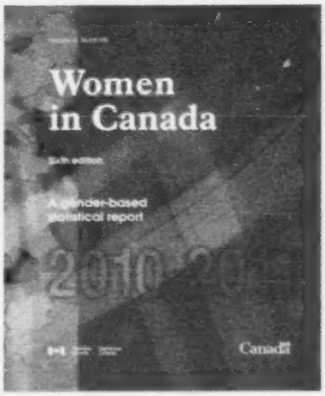
Component of Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-503-X
Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report

Article

Families, Living Arrangements and Unpaid Work

by Anne Milan, Leslie-Anne Keown and Covadonga Robles Urquijo



December 2011

Statistics Canada Statistique Canada

Canada

How to obtain more information

For information about this product or the wide range of services and data available from Statistics Canada, visit our website at www.statcan.gc.ca, e-mail us at infostats@statcan.gc.ca, or telephone us, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the following numbers:

Statistics Canada's National Contact Centre

Toll-free telephone (Canada and United States):

Inquiries line	1-800-263-1136
National telecommunications device for the hearing impaired	1-800-363-7629
Fax line	1-877-287-4369

Local or international calls:

Inquiries line	1-613-951-8116
Fax line	1-613-951-0581

Depository Services Program

Inquiries line	1-800-635-7943
Fax line	1-800-565-7757

To access this product

This product, Catalogue no. 89-503-X, is available free in electronic format. To obtain a single issue, visit our website at www.statcan.gc.ca and browse by "Key resource" > "Publications."

Standards of service to the public

Statistics Canada is committed to serving its clients in a prompt, reliable and courteous manner. To this end, Statistics Canada has developed standards of service that its employees observe. To obtain a copy of these service standards, please contact Statistics Canada toll-free at 1-800-263-1136. The service standards are also published on www.statcan.gc.ca under "About us" >"The agency" > "Providing services to Canadians."

Statistics Canada
Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division

Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report

Families, Living Arrangements and Unpaid Work

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

© Minister of Industry, 2011

All rights reserved. The content of this electronic publication may be reproduced, in whole or in part, and by any means, without further permission from Statistics Canada, subject to the following conditions: that it be done solely for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary, and/or for non-commercial purposes; and that Statistics Canada be fully acknowledged as follows: Source (or "Adapted from", if appropriate): Statistics Canada, year of publication, name of product, catalogue number, volume and issue numbers, reference period and page(s). Otherwise, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, by any means—electronic, mechanical or photocopy—or for any purposes without prior written permission of Licensing Services, Client Services Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0T6.

December 2011

Catalogue no. 89-503-X

ISBN 978-1-100-17400-6

Frequency: Occasional

Ottawa

Cette publication est également disponible en français.

Note of appreciation

Canada owes the success of its statistical system to a long-standing partnership between Statistics Canada, the citizens of Canada, its businesses, governments and other institutions. Accurate and timely statistical information could not be produced without their continued cooperation and goodwill.

User information

Symbols

The following standard symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0s	value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
p	preliminary
r	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
E	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

Acknowledgements

This publication was made possible thanks to the collaboration and financial support of Status of Women Canada, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Justice Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Health Canada, Canadian Heritage, Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Public Safety Canada, Western Economic Diversification Canada, Canadian Human Rights Commission, Department of National Defence, National Council of Welfare, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

This edition of *Women in Canada* was prepared by the Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division of Statistics Canada. The Statistics Canada team would like to acknowledge Status of Women for their role coordinating the review process with all partners.

Families, Living Arrangements and Unpaid Work

by Anne Milan, Leslie-Anne Keown and Covadonga Robles Urquijo

Introduction

Most women in Canada live as part of a family although they may experience a number of different living arrangements over the course of their lives. This chapter examines the family context and living arrangements of women. For those living in couples, it looks at whether they are in legal marriages or common-law unions, in opposite-sex or same-sex couples, and whether or not they have children present. Female lone-parent families are also analysed, as well as other arrangements such as living alone or with non-relatives.

Patterns related to births, marriages and divorces are explored, as are family characteristics and living arrangements of immigrant women and visible minority women. Finally, the area of unpaid work is examined, specifically the care of household children, domestic work and volunteering.[1]

Most women live as part of couples

According to the 2006 Census,[2] the majority of Canadians in private households lived in a family context either as a child, as part of a couple, as a lone parent or with other relatives (86% of females and 87% of males). Among children aged 14 and under, nearly all of the 2.7 million girls lived with married, common-law or lone parents. About 14,000 of these girls lived with their grandparents (without their parents present),[3] while 22,500 lived in private households with relatives other than parents or grandparents or with non-relatives. The patterns were similar for boys. Because there is little diversity in the living arrangements of girls, the rest of this chapter will focus primarily on women aged 15 and over.

In 2006, about 10.8 million women aged 15 and over (83%) lived either in a census family, as a married spouse, common-law partner, lone parent or child,[4] or in a household with other relatives. The majority of women (57%) lived as part of a couple (Table 1). Over six million women (47%) lived with their married spouse and almost 1.4 million (10%) lived with their common-law partner.

1. There is no information given in this chapter on unpaid work done for non-household members. Further information on care provided to non-household members will be available upon the release of the 2012 General Social Survey which focuses on caregiving.
2. With the exception of the section on living in collective dwellings, the census data in this chapter refer to the population in private households unless otherwise specified.
3. Children in census families include those with parents as well as those living with their grandparents and without parents present, known as skip-generation families. See the concept of census family in the *2006 Census Dictionary* for more information.
4. In this chapter, the term 'child', as part of the census family concept, refers to daughters and sons who do not have a spouse, common-law partner or children of their own in the same household. See the concept of census family in the *2006 Census Dictionary* for more information.

Table 1
Women and men aged 15 years and over, by living arrangements, Canada, 2006

Living arrangements	Women			Men		
	thousands	%	percentage growth 2001 to 2006	thousands	%	percentage growth 2001 to 2006
All living arrangements	**13,116.7**	**100.0**	**7.2**	**12,395.1**	**100.0**	**7.1**
In a couple	7,478.7	57.0	6.0	7,486.9	60.4	6.0
With married spouse	6,105.4	46.5	3.5	6,106.5	49.3	3.5
With common-law partner	1,373.3	10.5	18.9	1,380.4	11.1	18.8
Lone parents	1,132.3	8.6	6.3	281.8	2.3	14.6
As children	1,871.5	14.3	9.5	2,347.8	18.9	7.0
With relatives[1]	360.6	2.7	11.6	245.3	2.0	12.5
With non-relatives only	428.5	3.3	5.4	551.6	4.4	2.3
Alone	1,845.3	14.1	10.5	1,481.8	12.0	13.4

1. These households may also contain non-relatives. See *2006 Census Dictionary* for more information on census family concepts.
Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 and 2006.

The percentage of women living as part of a couple was highest for those in their late thirties, when close to three-quarters (74%) lived with a spouse or partner (Table 2). For men, living as part of a couple peaked at age 65 to 69 (81%). In comparison, about three-fifths of women in their late sixties (63%) were in a couple. By age 80 years and over, one-fifth (22%) of women were part of a couple as were two-thirds (66%) of men. Higher life expectancy for both women and men (although women continue to live longer than men) means that both sexes can potentially remain in couples for a longer duration throughout their senior years.

Table 2
Population in couples by age group and sex, Canada, 2006

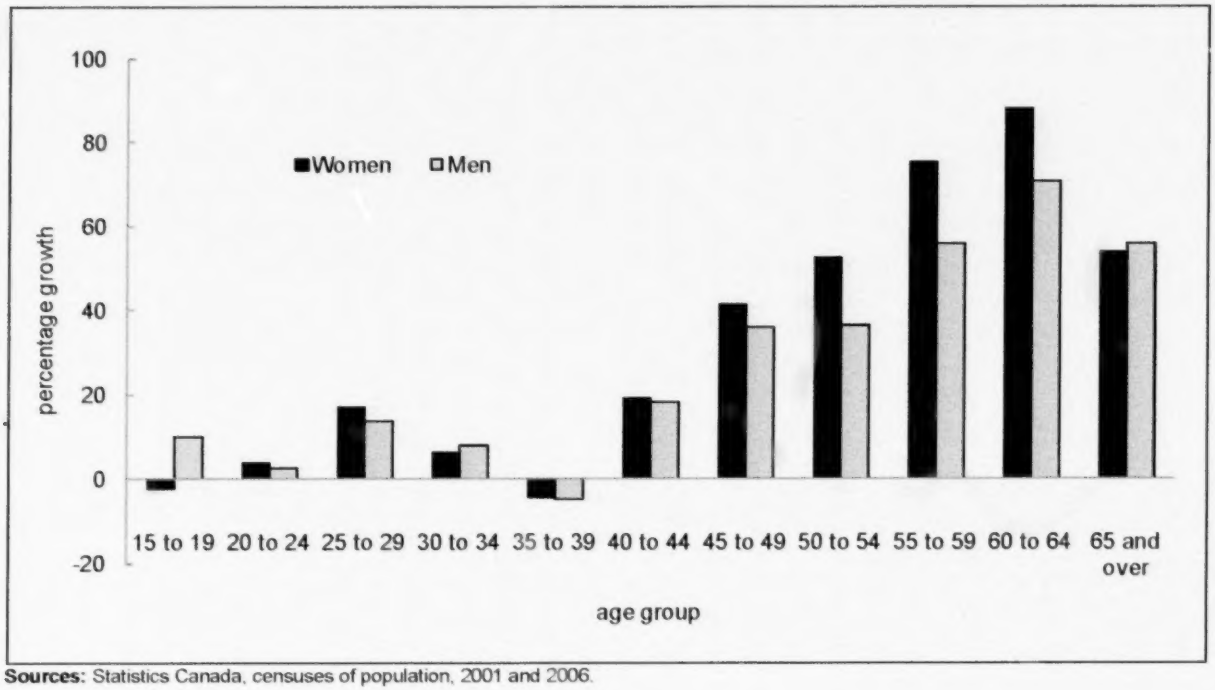
Age group	Women	Men
	percentage	
15 to 19	2.6	0.9
20 to 24	23.2	12.6
25 to 29	54.5	42.2
30 to 34	70.6	64.9
35 to 39	73.7	72.1
40 to 44	73.4	73.5
45 to 49	73.2	74.6
50 to 54	72.5	76.5
55 to 59	70.9	78.7
60 to 64	68.1	80.1
65 to 69	62.7	80.7
70 to 74	54.9	79.0
75 to 79	42.1	76.2
80 and over	22.3	65.7

Source: Milan, A., M. Vézina and C. Wells. 2007. *Family portrait: Continuity and change in Canadian families and households in 2006: 2006 Census*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-553-X.

Women in common-law unions increasing

Most women in couples were married (82%) while the remainder were in common-law unions (18%). However, the number of women in common-law unions steadily increased over the last few decades, likely reflecting the greater social acceptance of this living arrangement. In the five years prior to 2006, the number of women in married couples rose 3.5%, while those in common-law unions grew at more than five times that pace (19%). During this period, growth of common-law unions increased most rapidly for women in their early sixties (88%), although the overall number of women in these unions remained relatively low. Growth for men living in common-law unions was also high in this age group, at 70% (Chart 1).

Chart 1
Percentage growth of women and men in common-law couples, by age group, Canada, 2001 to 2006



Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 and 2006.

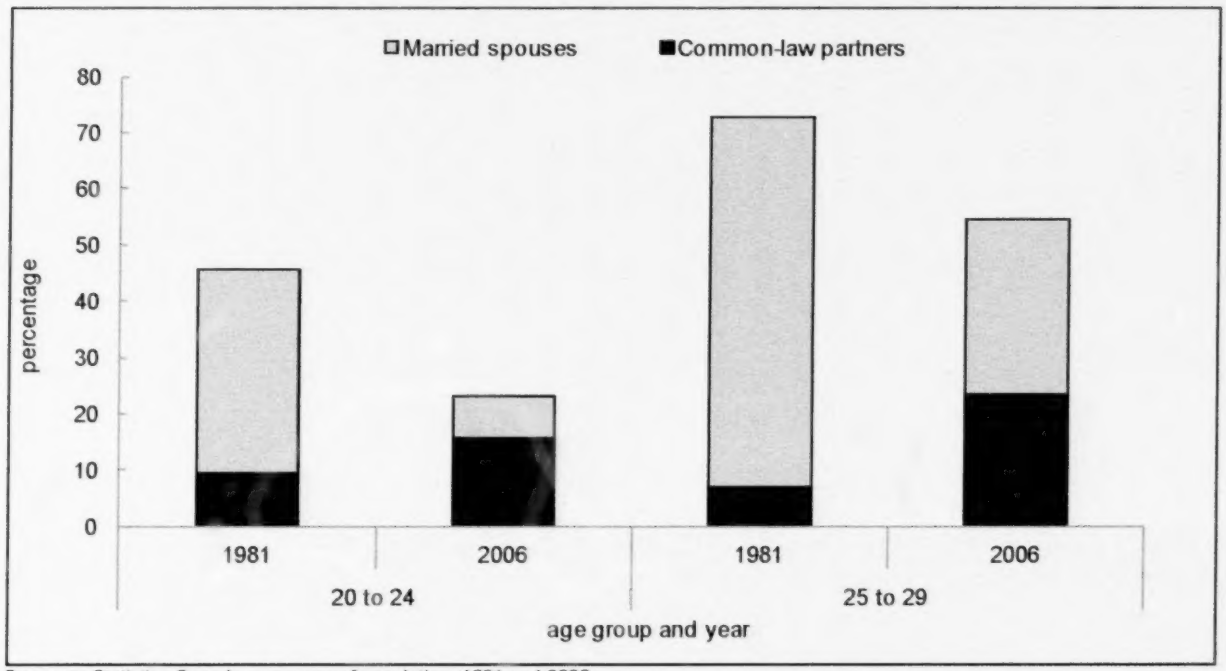
A number of factors could account for the growth of common-law unions within older age groups. In general, there was an increased growth for all living arrangements due to the sheer size of the baby-boom cohort, aged approximately 41 to 60 in 2006. From 2001 to 2006, the numbers of women and men in married couples also grew for all age groups over the age of 45, but much less than those of common-law partners. There may be a growing acceptance among older generations of what has been primarily a living arrangement among young adults. As well, women and men who began living common-law when younger may remain in this living arrangement as they grow older. Following the dissolution of an earlier marriage, a growing number of people may choose to live common-law in subsequent relationships. This suggests that individuals may still want to be part of a couple, but not necessarily a marriage.[5]

In contrast, the number of people aged 35 to 39—part of the baby-buster cohort that followed the baby-boomers—declined between 2001 and 2006, and there was a corresponding decline in the number of people in common-law unions (a drop of 4.5% for women in this age group).

5. For more information, see: Milan, A., M. Vézina and C. Wells. 2007. *Family portrait: Continuity and change in Canadian families and households in 2006. 2006 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-553-X.

Most women and men who lived in common-law unions in 2006 were young. The largest share of women living with a common-law partner was among 25- to 29-year-olds (23%), more than triple their share in 1981 (7.1%). Despite the higher percentage of women in their late twenties living with a common-law partner, it did not compensate for the much larger decrease of married women. Consequently, the overall share of women 25- to-29-year-old in couples declined from 73% in 1981 to 55% in 2006, largely owing to the drop in married women from 66% in 1981 to 31% in 2006 (Chart 2). A similar pattern holds for men in this age group, although their overall share in couples was lower (64% in 1981 and 42% in 2006). Fewer women in their early twenties were in couples in both 1981 and 2006, but like women in their late twenties, there was a drop in married women and an increase in women in common-law unions. In 2006, the majority of 20- to-24-year-old women in couples were in common-law unions

Chart 2
Women aged 20 to 29 years in couples, by age group, Canada, 1981 and 2006

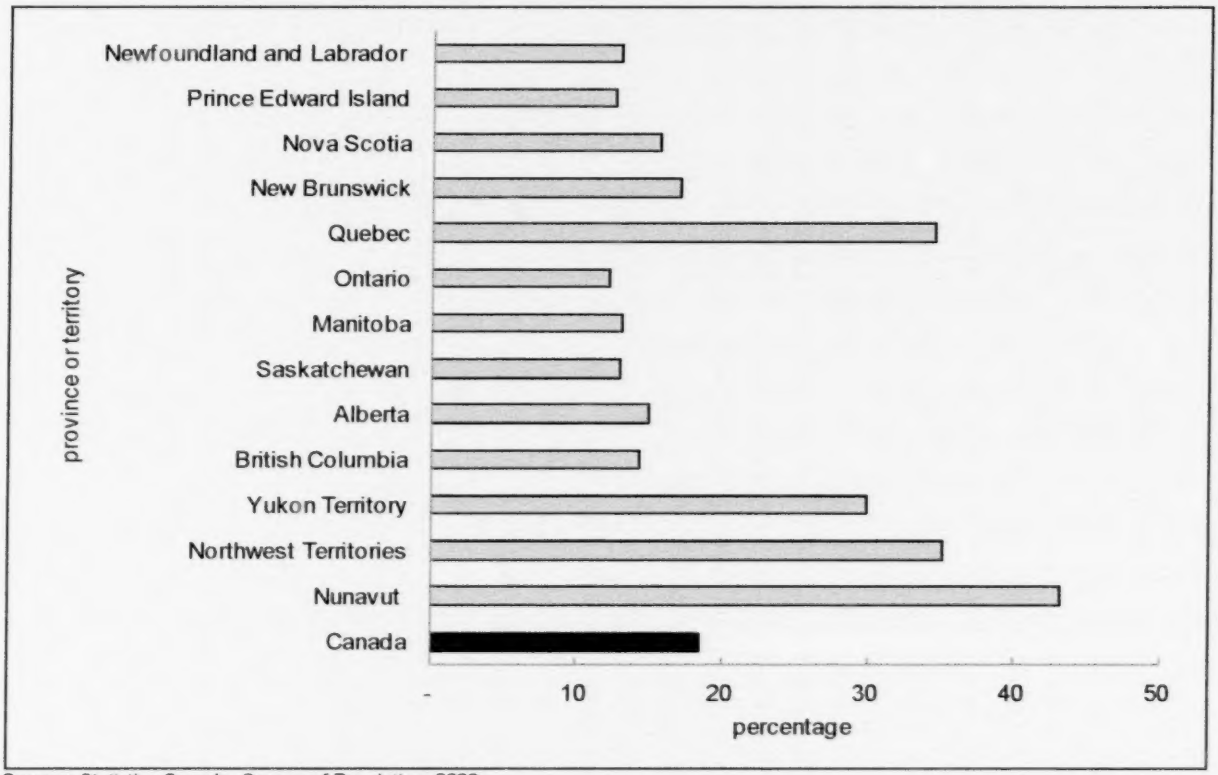


Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981 and 2006.

Living in common-law unions is more predominant in some parts of Canada than others (Chart 3). In 2006, the percentage of women in couples living with a common-law partner in Quebec (35%) was almost double that for Canada as a whole (18%). The greater popularity of common-law unions in Quebec, compared with elsewhere in Canada, may have its roots in the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, the historical influence of the Catholic Church on family life began to wane, and the transition toward a more secular society occurred in conjunction with the growth of the women's movement, increased access to contraception and a broadened divorce legislation.[6] The share of women in couples who were in common-law unions was also large in the territories in 2006, particularly Nunavut (43%) and the Northwest Territories (35%).

6. Péron, Y. 2003. « Du mariage obligatoire au mariage facultatif », in Piché, V. and C. Le Bourdais. *La démographie québécoise. Enjeux du XXI^e siècle*. Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal. Chapter 3, p. 110 to 143.

Chart 3
Women living common-law as a percentage of all women in couples, Canada, provinces and territories, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Women in same-sex couples a growing minority

The majority of women living in couples are in opposite-sex couples. The 2001 Census was the first to enumerate same-sex common-law couples and at that time, 30,400 women were in such unions. Same-sex marriage was first legalized in the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia in 2003 and for Canada as a whole, in 2005. In 2006, about 41,200 women were in same-sex couples, either married or common-law (Table 3). Of this number, 6,900 women were in a same-sex married couple, representing 17% of all women in same-sex unions.

Table 3
Women and men in couples, by couple status, Canada, 2006

Couple status	Women			Men		
	thousands	%	percentage growth 2001 to 2006	thousands	%	percentage growth 2001 to 2006
All persons in couples	**7,478.7**	**100.0**	**6.0**	**7,486.9**	**100.0**	**6.0**
Same-sex	41.2	0.6	35.5	49.5	0.7	30.2
Married[1]	6.9	0.1	..	8.0	0.1	..
Common-law	34.3	0.5	12.8	41.5	0.6	9.1
Opposite-sex	7,437.4	99.4	5.9	7,437.4	99.3	5.9
Married	6,098.4	81.5	3.3	6,098.4	81.5	3.3
Common-law	1,339.0	17.9	19.1	1,339.0	17.9	19.1

1. Data on same-sex married spouses were first collected in 2006.
Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001 and 2006.

Women living in a same-sex union represented 0.6% of all women in couples in Canada in 2006 (or 41,200), while the 49,500 men living in a same-sex union accounted for 0.7% of all men in couples. The majority of women in same-sex relationships, or 57%, were younger than 45 years compared with 45% of similarly aged women in opposite-sex couples. For men, the percentages were 59% and 38%, respectively.

In 2006, 16% of women in same-sex couples had children aged 24 and under present in the home, a smaller share than for women in opposite-sex unions (49%) but a much higher percentage than for men in same-sex couples (2.9%). The percentage of people in same-sex couples with children was higher for those who were married than for those who were living in a common-law relationship. About one-quarter (24%) of same-sex married women had children, compared with 15% of women in same-sex common-law couples. For men in same-sex unions, 9.0% of same-sex married men had children living with them, as did 1.7% of men with a same-sex common-law partner.

Couples with children declining over time

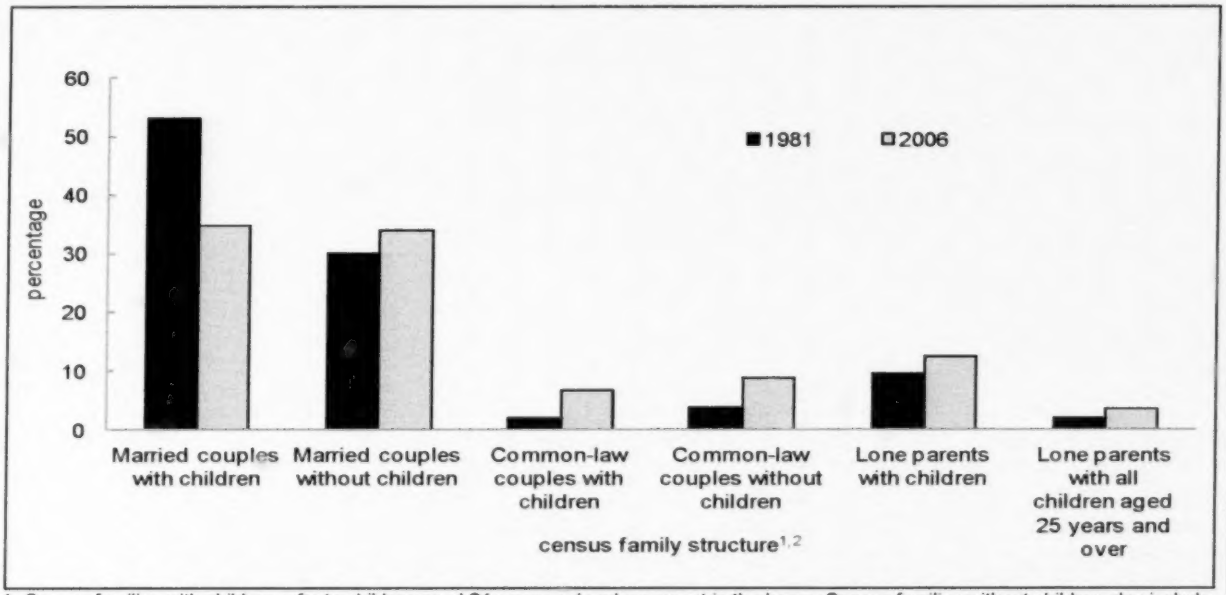
In Canada, there were 8.9 million families in 2006. Of these, 84% were couple families, which included married couples (69%) and common-law couples (15%). There were also just over 1.4 million lone-parent families, accounting for 16% of all families. Twenty-five years earlier, in 1981, there had been 6.3 million families, of which 83% were married couples, 5.6% were common-law couples, and 11% were lone-parent families.[1]

A large number of families living in Canada have children living at home, but the share has been decreasing for at least the last several decades. For the first time in 2006, there were slightly more couples without children in the home (43% of all families) than couples with children (41% of all families). In 1981, these figures were 34% and 55%, respectively. (see box chart)

1. Historical comparisons for census families, particularly lone-parent families, must be interpreted with caution due to conceptual changes in 2001.

Note: Couples with children include married- or common-law-couple families with children; these refer to census families with at least one child aged 24 and under present in the home. Married- or common-law-couple families without children include those where all children are aged 25 and over.

Box Chart
Percentage of census families with and without children, by census family structure, Canada, 1981 and 2006



1. Census families with children refer to children aged 24 years and under present in the home. Census families without children also include families with all children aged 25 years and over.
2. Historical comparisons for census families, particularly lone-parent families, must be interpreted with caution due to conceptual changes in 2001.

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981 and 2006.

Canada's aging population might partially explain this decrease in couple families with children at home. Many baby-boomers—the large cohort born between 1946 and 1965 which has influenced many demographic trends—are more likely to have married and to have adult children who now live independently. In fact, married spouses without children had an older median age[1] (60.8 years) in 2006 compared with married spouses with children (43.4 years).[2] The following cohort, the baby-busters—born during the period of 1966 to 1974—experienced lower fertility rates. This combination of aging baby boomers and the low fertility rate of the baby-busters, contributed to the decrease observed in the last 25 years in the share of married-couple families with children living at home.

On the other hand, there was an increase in common-law couples with children, as a share of all families during the same period, from 1981 to 2006. However, since most couples are married, the decrease in married couples with children offset the increase in common-law couples with children. The result was an overall decline in couples with children.

Notes:
1. Median age refers to the age at which half of the population is older and half is younger.
2. Milan, A., M. Vézina and C. Wells. 2007. *Family portrait: Continuity and change in Canadian families and households in 2006: 2006 Census*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-553-X.

Share of female lone-parent families remains stable in recent years

Lone-parent families can be formed as a result of divorce, separation, death or having a child outside of a union. There may be a parent in another household who remains financially and/or emotionally involved in the lives of his or her children, and with whom the child may live on a part-time basis. There were about four times as many female lone-parent families (1.1 million) as male lone-parent families (281,800) in 2006, a fairly consistent ratio over the past several decades. However, from 2001 to 2006, male lone-parent families grew more rapidly (15%) than did female lone-parent families (6.3%). In 2006, female lone-parent families represented 13% of all families, the same share as in 2001.

In 2006, about half (50%) of female lone parents were divorced or separated,[7] 30% had never been legally married and one-fifth (20%) were widowed. Twenty-five years earlier, in 1981, a higher percentage of female lone parents were divorced or separated (56%), more were widowed (33%), and fewer were never-married (11%). This change in the marital status of lone parents reflects the increasing number of divorces as well as separations among never-married partners in common-law unions; it also reflects a greater acceptance of births outside marriage. Prior to the 1968 *Divorce Act*, which introduced no-fault divorce following separation of three years or more, divorce was a relatively uncommon path to lone parenthood. There was a large increase in the number of divorces following this legislation, and again in the late 1980s following the 1985 *Divorce Act* amendment which reduced the minimum separation period to one year.

Female lone-parent families made up about 18% of all families with children under aged 24 and under,[8] in both 2001 and 2006. In comparison, male lone-parent families accounted for 4.7% of such families in 2006, up slightly from 4.2% in 2001. A higher percentage of female than male lone-parent families had children under age six in 2006 (15% of all female lone-parent families with children aged 24 and under compared with 11% of male lone-parent families). In 2001, these figures were 18% and 12%, respectively. Female lone-parents were also younger than male lone-parents—the median age of female lone-parents with children aged 24 and under was 41.7 years in 2006 and for male lone-parents, it was 45.5 years.

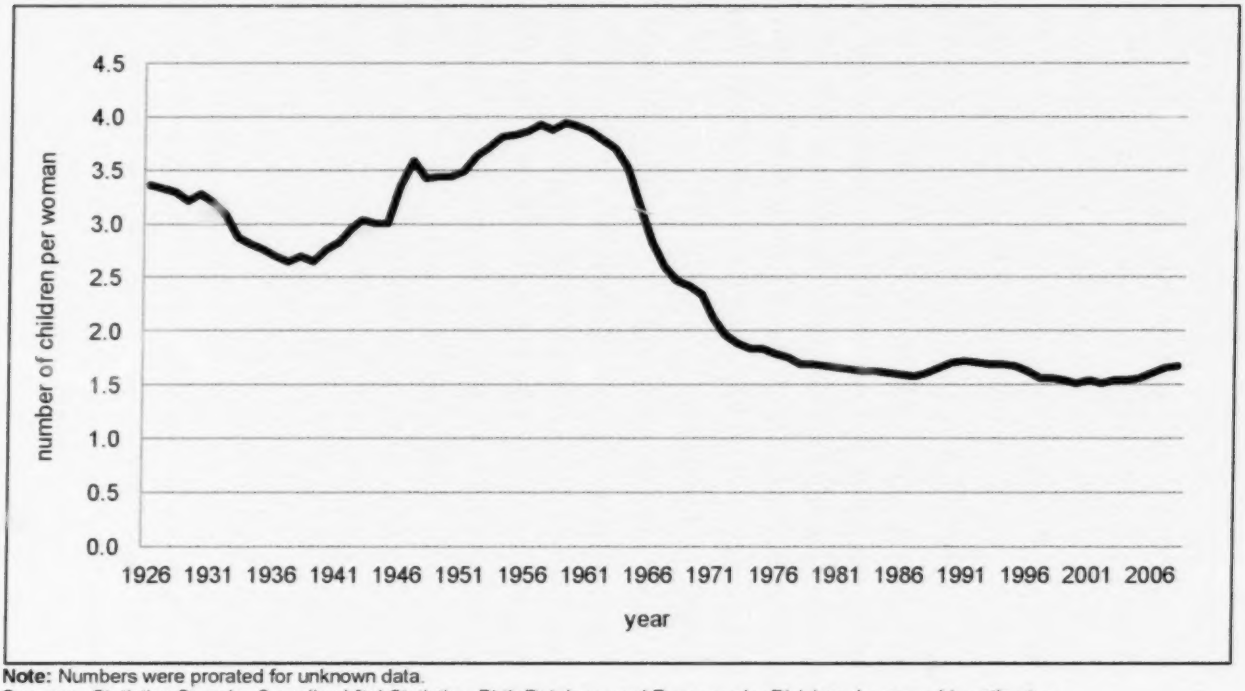
7. Also includes a small percentage of lone parents who reported they were married, spouse absent for both the 1981 and 2006 figures.
8. This paragraph refers only to lone-parent families with children aged 24 and under living at home. In 2006, there were also close to 258,000 female lone-parent families that only had children aged 25 and over. In these families, exchange and support could flow in both directions between parent and children.

Fewer children and older mothers

There were 377,900 births in Canada in 2008, a steady increase since 2003 and the highest recorded since 1995.[9] The total fertility rate—that is, the average number of children a woman would bear during her reproductive lifetime if she experienced the age-specific fertility rates of a given calendar year—was 1.68 in 2008. This indicator allows for annual comparisons over time as it is not affected by changes in population size or age structure.

The total fertility rate in Canada has changed during the past century. From 3.36 children per woman in 1926, it declined during the years of the Great Depression and the Second World War to fewer than three children per woman (Chart 4). The following period of prosperity and optimism contributed to the baby boom phenomenon, that is, the relatively high fertility rate during the years 1946 to 1965, which peaked in 1959 at almost four children per woman. Fertility rates subsequently declined, and since 1972 the total fertility rate has remained below the replacement level of 2.1—the level needed in order to replace the population in the absence of migration. In the latter part of the 2000s, fertility rates have edged up slightly.

Chart 4
Total fertility rate, Canada, 1926 to 2008

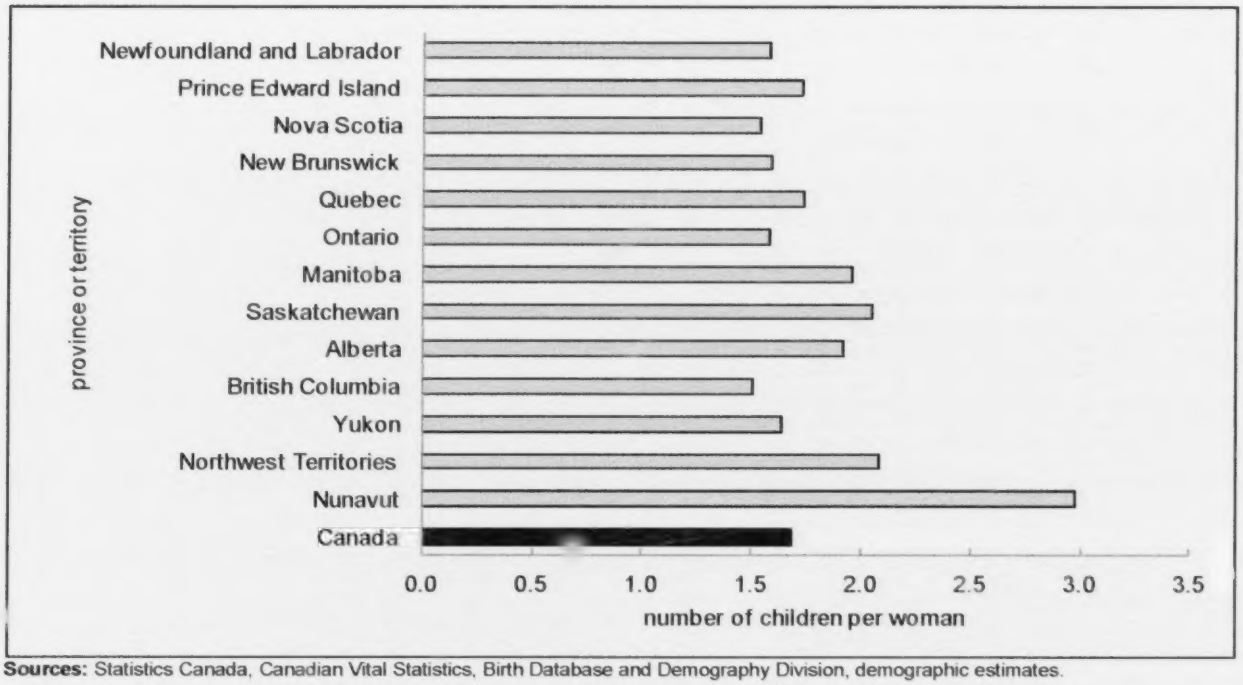


Note: Numbers were prorated for unknown data.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Birth Database and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

Across Canada in 2008, the highest total fertility rate was found in Nunavut—almost three children per woman (2.98)—owing to its large Aboriginal population that has higher overall fertility (Chart 5). Among the provinces, Saskatchewan was the only province with a total fertility rate of more than two children (2.05) per woman in 2008.

9. Milan, A. 2011. "Fertility: Overview, 2008". *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-209.

Chart 5
Total fertility rate, Canada, provinces and territories, 2008



Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Birth Database and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

Women are having fewer children overall and they are having them at older ages. In 2008, the average age of women at childbirth was 29.8 years; for first-time mothers, it was 28.1 years. The shift to childbearing at older ages that began more than forty years ago—the average age of first birth was 23.5 years in the mid 1960s—has continued into the late 2000s.

There is an increasing compression of childbearing as more women have their first child at older ages and then complete their childbearing in a relatively shorter period of time than in the past. Among the reasons which account for the delay in childbearing are the pursuit of higher levels of education, labour force participation, and delayed union formation. Half (50%) of all births in 2008 were to women aged 30 and over, more than double the percentage in 1981 (24%). In 2008, 4.1% of births occurred among young women aged 15 to 19, down from about 8% in the early 1980s.[10]

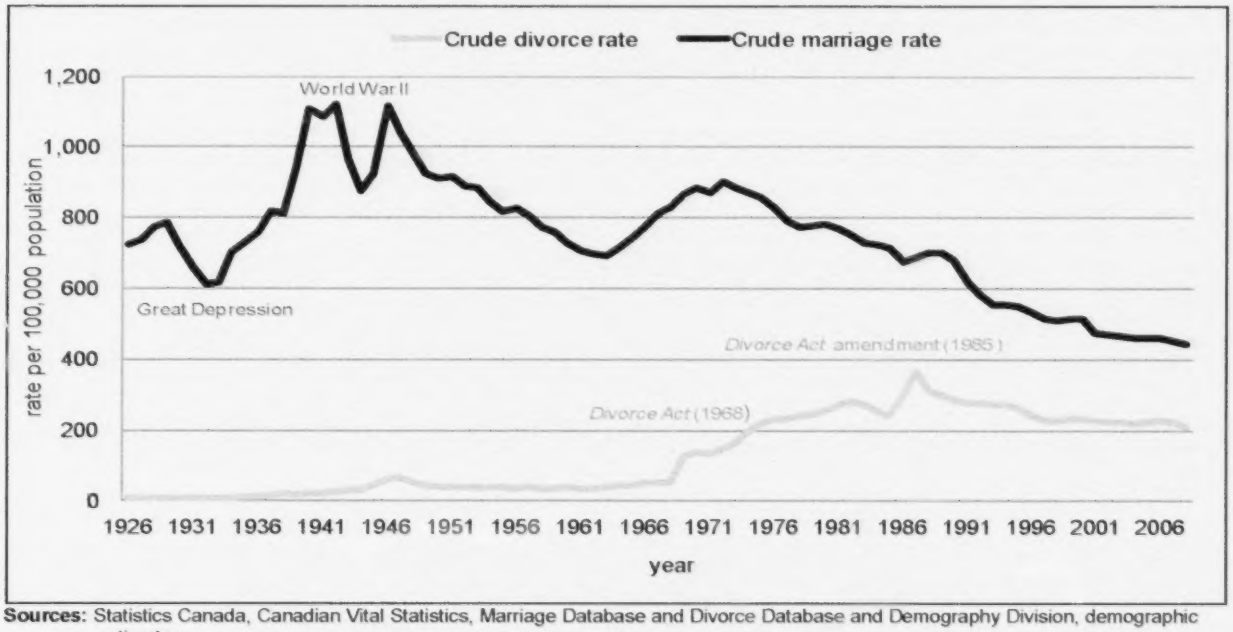
Based on 2005 data for multiple births, most births that year were single births (97%), while 2.9% consisted of twins and 0.1% of triplets or more[11]—about 10,400 multiple births altogether.[12] Nearly twenty-five years earlier, in 1981, 1.8% of all births were twins or other multiple births. Among women who gave birth to twins in 2005, the share of those in their late twenties had fallen to 27%, from 39% in 1981, while there were increases for 35- to 39-year-old women (from 5.2% in 1981 to 19% in 2005) and those aged 40 and over (from 0.6% in 1981 to 4.2% in 2005). The patterns for triplets or more were similar. Several factors could contribute to the increase in multiple births for women aged 30 and over, including the overall shift to childbearing at older ages as well as the use of reproductive technologies which may result in multiple births.

10. Romaniuc, A. 1984. *Fertility in Canada: From baby-boom to baby-bust*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-524E.
11. Multiple births comprising quadruplets or more are very rare.
12. Milan, A. and L. Martel. 2008. "Part I: Current demographic situation in Canada, 2005 and 2006". *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada, 2005 and 2006*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-209-X.

Fewer marriages[13]

There were 147,300 marriages in Canada in 2008, according to the most recent Canadian Vital Statistics data. There has been some fluctuation over the years. For example, in 2000 there were 157,400 marriages, reflecting the popularity of marrying during the millennium year. Despite an increase in the total female population over time, the number of women in Canada getting married has been generally declining since the early 1970s. Marriage patterns over the last century can also be traced using the crude marriage rate (or total number of marriages per 100,000 population in a given year) which has been decreasing overall since the early 1970s. In 2008, it was 444 marriages per 100,000 population, about half the rate recorded close to four decades earlier—902 marriages per 100,000 population in 1972 (Chart 6).

Chart 6
Crude marriage rate and crude divorce rate, Canada, 1926 to 2008



Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Marriage Database and Divorce Database and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

Throughout the last century crude marriage rates have fluctuated in tandem with historical events. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the crude rate fell as people may have been less willing or able to marry during a period of high unemployment and challenging economic circumstances. Canada entered the Second World War in 1939 and concerns regarding possible conscription—which would have impacted single men more than married men—may have influenced some couples to marry. The crude marriage rate dropped during the war years to 876 per 100,000 in 1944 then peaked again in 1946 as couples were reunited after the war.

On average, the age at which people get married for the first time is increasing. In 2008, the average age of women at first marriage was 29.6 years, about two years younger than that of men (31.6 years). This was higher than throughout the 1960s and 1970s when people married at younger ages—in 1972, for example, at an average age of 23.0 years for women and 25.4 years for men. While the age at marriage has increased during the past four decades, the two-year age differential between women and men has remained fairly stable.

13. Marriage data in this section are from Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Marriage Database.

Relatively high rates of divorce have increased the size of the population potentially able to remarry. Following a divorce, two people are eligible to remarry while this is the case for only one person following widowhood. As well, because divorce tends to occur at younger ages than widowhood, divorced individuals may be more willing, or have more opportunity, to enter a new union. For divorced women who remarried in 2008, the average age at remarriage was 44.5 years while for those who had been widowed, it was 57.6 years. For men, the average ages were 48.1 years and 63.9 years, respectively.

Stable number of divorces[14]

In 2008, there were about 70,200 divorces in Canada, representing a crude divorce rate of 211 divorces per 100,000 population. Nearly one-fifth (19%) of divorces that were finalized in 2008 were for marriages that lasted four years or less. An additional 23% of divorces were for marriages that lasted between five and nine years. The 30 year divorce rate per 1,000 marriages was 407 in 2008, meaning that 40.7% of marriages are expected to end in divorce before the 30th year of marriage (if the duration-specific divorce rates calculated for 2008 remain stable).

Prior to 1968, divorce was relatively rare and crude rates remained low according to the data observed throughout the early to mid 1900s. Over the last century, peaks in the crude divorce rate followed the 1968 and 1985 divorce legislation, with a record high in 1987 of 364 divorces per 100,000 population. Since approximately the late 1990s, the number of divorces and the crude divorce rate have been relatively stable perhaps as more people are living common-law, are reluctant to legally marry, or both. In addition, some marriage breakdowns might not be formalized by a legal divorce unless one spouse wants to enter a new marriage.

Not only are women and men getting married at older ages, they are also getting divorced at older ages. The age at which couple's divorce has been slowly increasing in recent decades. In 2008, the median age at divorce for women was 41.0 years, up from 35.7 years in 1991.[15] For men, the median age at divorce increased from 38.3 to 44.0 years during the same period.

Some couples who divorce do not have dependents, some couples with dependents agree on custody arrangements independently of court proceedings, and other couples obtain custody of children through court proceedings. Based on 2004 data, of the 31,800 custody decisions that year, custody was jointly granted to the husband and wife in almost half of all proceedings (47%), continuing the upward trend of the last two decades.[16]

Cases where custody of dependents is awarded to the wife only have been decreasing from 76% in 1988[17] to 45% in 2004. Custody cases granted to the husband only represented 8.1% in 2004, compared with a high of 15% in 1986.[18] One possible explanation for the more rapid gain of male lone-parent families is the growing share of joint custody arrangements following a union dissolution and fewer mothers being granted sole custody following a divorce.

Since divorces are only for legal marriages, the dissolutions of common-law unions are not considered in these statistics. According to the 2006 General Social Survey, from 2001 to 2006, there were about the same number of people who terminated a marriage either through separation or divorce, as there were who ended a common-law relationship.[19] Given the higher number of legal marriages than common-law unions (6.1 million and 1.4 million, respectively, according to the 2006 Census), this reflects the greater tendency of the latter to dissolve compared with marriages.

14. Unless otherwise specified, divorce data in this section are from Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Divorce Database.
15. Data indicating unknown age and sex are excluded from the calculation of median age at divorce.
16. Statistics Canada CANSIM Table 101-6512 *Number of dependents in divorces involving custody orders, by party to whom custody was granted, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*. In data from the Central Registry of Divorce Proceedings, joint custody does not necessarily refer to where children live—they may be in sole physical custody with joint legal (decision-making) arrangements or in shared physical custody with joint legal arrangements as well. Under a joint custody arrangement, dependents do not necessarily spend equal amounts of their time with each parent; however decision-making responsibilities are shared between parents.
17. Statistics Canada. 2004. "Divorces 2001 and 2002". *The Daily*. May 4th.
18. The remaining 0.4% of custody orders was either awarded to an agency, a person other than the husband or wife or it was not stated.
19. Beaupré, P. and E. Cloutier. 2007. *Navigating Family Transitions: Evidence from the General Social Survey- 2006*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no 89-625-X.

Intact families most common

According to the 2006 General Social Survey, the majority of couples with children (88%) were intact families, that is, all of the biological or adopted children were common to both members of the couple. There were more than 500,000 stepfamilies—these comprise one or more children of only one member of the couple and whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship. Stepfamilies accounted for 12% of couples with children, or 5.3% of all families in Canada.[20]

About 6.3% of all couples with children were simple stepfamilies—that is, all children were of one spouse or partner only and preceded the current relationship. The children in simple stepfamilies were more likely to be of mothers (5.0% of all couples with children) than of fathers (1.2% of all couples with children).[21] An additional 5.3% of couples with children were complex stepfamilies—these include children of each spouse or partner and whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship, or comprise one or more children from the current union together with one or more children who preceded it.

Many older women live alone

Over four million women and men did not live with family members in 2006, but either lived alone or with non-relatives only—that is, as roommates, lodgers or boarders. This represented over 17% of all women in Canada (and 16% of men). These types of living arrangements were fairly common among women and men in their late twenties, when 17% of women and 24% of men did not live with family or relatives. This likely reflects a stage in the life course of individuals when they are not living in couples and may be pursuing their education and establishing their financial independence. Young adults who share accommodations may do so either as a cost saving measure, for companionship, or both.

For women, the percentage living outside of a family context decreased (less than 10%) during the prime years of family formation—the late thirties and early forties—then it increased again after age 50, when more women were living alone. For men, the percentage living outside of a family context was about 16%, from their early forties to early sixties. Most women who were not living with family members lived alone (14% of all women), a share which increased with age.

In 2006, among people aged 20 to 54, a lower percentage of women than men lived alone. This gender difference reflects the tendency of women to be slightly younger than their spouses or partners when they form unions. By their mid-to-late fifties, more women than men lived alone, with the gap increasing throughout the senior years. By age 65 to 69, one-quarter (25%) of women lived alone, as did 14% of men. The percentage of people who lived alone was highest at 80 years and over for both women (54%) and men (24%). This sex differential in later life can be largely explained by the higher life expectancy of women compared with men, and as a consequence, the higher percentage of women who were widowed.[22]

Most women and men lived in private households in 2006 (98%) while about 2% lived in collective dwellings, most of which were health care and related facilities such as nursing homes (2.2% of women and 1.7% of men).[23] Specifically, about 296,500 women and 219,100 men lived in some form of collective dwelling. Owing to their greater longevity, a higher percentage of women than men spent at least some of their senior years in collective dwellings (9.3% compared with 5.1%) in 2006.

20. Bechard, M. 2007. *Family Structure by Region, 2006 (Revised)*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-625-XIE.
21. Does not sum to 6.3% due to rounding.
22. Milan, A., M. Vézina and C. Wells. 2007. *Family portrait: Continuity and change in Canadian families and households in 2006: 2006 Census*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-553-X.
23. Across all age groups, 304,900 females lived in some form of collective dwellings, including about 8,400 girls aged 14 and under.

Living arrangements vary by ethnocultural group[24]

According to the 2006 Census, over two million visible minority women aged 15 and over lived in private households (Table 4). About 9 in 10 (90%) visible minority women lived in a family context either as a child, as part of a couple, as a lone parent or with other relatives, while few lived alone (6.4%) or with non-relatives only (3.7%). A slightly lower percentage of visible minority women lived as part of a couple (54%) than did non-visible minority women (58%). However, more visible minority women were married than non-visible minority women (51% compared with 46%) and fewer lived common-law (3.6% compared with 12%).

Table 4
Women and men aged 15 years and over, by living arrangement and visible minority status, Canada, 2006

Living arrangement	Women				Men			
	Visible minority		Not a visible minority		Visible minority		Not a visible minority	
	thousands	%	thousands	%	thousands	%	thousands	%
All living arrangements	**2,037.1**	**100.0**	**11,079.6**	**100.0**	**1,871.3**	**100.0**	**10,523.9**	**100.0**
In a couple	1,103.6	54.2	6,375.0	57.5	1,077.5	57.6	6,409.4	60.9
With married spouse	1,030.3	50.6	5,075.1	45.8	1,003.5	53.6	5,102.9	48.5
With common-law partner	73.4	3.6	1,299.9	11.7	74.0	4.0	1,306.4	12.4
Lone parents	208.7	10.2	923.6	8.3	37.7	2.0	244.1	2.3
As children	403.0	19.8	1,468.4	13.3	473.6	25.3	1,874.2	17.8
With relatives[1]	115.1	5.6	245.5	2.2	64.3	3.4	181.0	1.7
With non-relatives only	75.4	3.7	353.1	3.2	86.5	4.6	465.0	4.4
Alone	131.3	6.4	1,714.0	15.5	131.6	7.0	1,350.1	12.8

1. These households may also contain non-relatives. See *2006 Census Dictionary* for more information on census family concepts.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Among the visible minority women in couples, there were some differences for specific groups—15% of Black and 14% of Latin American women lived with a common-law partner, as did 12% Japanese women. This was the case for 3% or less of Arab and West Asian, as well as South Asian women.

About 10% of visible minority women were lone parents as were 8.3% of non-visible minority women, but the shares were higher for women who were Black (24%), Latin American (14%) and Southeast Asian (12%).

Another aspect of the diversity of families in Canada today is the growing percentage of couples which are mixed unions—that is, one member of a couple belongs to a visible minority group and the other does not, or both spouses or partners belong to different visible minority groups. According to the 2006 Census, 3.9% of the 7.5 million couples in Canada were in mixed unions.[25] Between 2001 and 2006, mixed unions grew at more than five times the pace of all couples (33% and 6.0%, respectively). The growth of mixed unions may be the result of people having more opportunities to meet and develop relationships with those from different backgrounds in various social, educational or work-related settings. As well, a greater number of people in Canada identify themselves as belonging to visible minority groups.

24. Data in this section are from the Census of Population.
25. Milan, A., H. Maheux and T. Chui. 2010. "A portrait of couples in mixed unions", *Canadian Social Trends*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-008-X.

Overall, women and men who belonged to visible minority groups and were in couples had similar shares in mixed unions. However, within various minority groups, there were some differences. For example, Filipino, Korean, Southeast Asian, Japanese, Chinese and Latin American women in couples accounted for a higher percentage of spouses or partners in mixed unions than did men from these visible minority groups. There were more than three times as many married or partnered Filipino women in mixed unions (28%) as there were Filipino men (9%).

For the Japanese population, nearly two-thirds (65%) of Japanese women in couples were in mixed unions, while this was the case for over one-half (52%) of Japanese men. Arab and West Asian, as well as Black and South Asian women who were in couples had lower percentages of mixed unions compared with men from these groups. In 2006, about half as many Arab or West Asian married or partnered women were paired outside their visible minority group (9%) as were men (19%). Similarly, two in ten Black women in couples were in mixed unions, as were three in ten Black men.

Living arrangements also varied by immigrant status. According to the 2006 Census, more than three million immigrant women aged 15 and over in Canada lived in private households.[26] Most immigrant women lived with family members (86%) either as part of a couple, as a lone parent, as a child, or with other relatives (Table 5). Some immigrant women lived alone (11%) and few lived only with non-relatives (2.2%). A higher percentage of recent immigrant women—those who had been living in Canada for less than five years—lived in a family context (92%) compared with non-immigrant women (82%). The patterns were similar among immigrant men.

Table 5
Women and men aged 15 years and over, by immigration status and living arrangement, Canada, 2006

Living arrangement	Women			Men		
	Recent immigrants[1]	All immigrants	Non-immigrant	Recent immigrants[1]	All immigrants	Non-immigrant
	percentage					
All living arrangements	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
In a couple	66.4	62.2	55.6	64.6	70.2	57.7
With married spouse	62.8	58.4	43.0	61.0	65.6	44.6
With common-law partner	3.6	3.8	12.5	3.6	4.6	13.1
Lone parents	6.6	9.6	8.4	1.3	2.2	2.3
As children	13.6	9.9	15.7	17.6	13.1	20.8
With relatives[2]	5.3	4.7	2.1	3.9	2.5	1.8
With non-relatives only	3.9	2.2	3.4	5.9	3.0	4.7
Alone	4.3	11.4	14.9	6.7	9.0	12.8

1. Recent immigrants are immigrants who arrived in Canada from 2001 to 2006. They are a subgroup of the immigrant category.
2. These households may also contain non-relatives. See *2006 Census Dictionary* for more information on census family concepts.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

A higher percentage of recent immigrant women (66%) lived as part of a couple in 2006 compared with all immigrant women (62%) or non-immigrant women (56%). However, the share of recent immigrant women living in a common-law relationship was lower (3.6%) than that of non-immigrant women (13%). In 2006, living with relatives was higher for immigrant women (4.7%)—particularly for recent immigrant women (5.3%)—than for non-immigrant women (2.1%), perhaps due to factors such as economic necessity, immigration sponsorship requirements or cultural preferences.

26. In this section, the census data which refer to the immigrant population include some individuals who have resided in Canada for many years and others who have arrived recently. These data include a small number of immigrants born in Canada and exclude non-permanent residents.

Unpaid work inside and outside the home

Whatever their family and living arrangements, many women and men work without pay in the home and in the community. This section uses data from the General Social Survey of 2010 to examine the weekly average hours spent on unpaid work, as estimated by respondents aged 15 and over.[27] [28] Differences between women and men will be examined for specific unpaid activities: first, the amount of unpaid care provided to children aged 14 and under who were reported by respondents as being part of their household; next, the time spent on domestic work such as cleaning and household maintenance; and finally, the care provided to seniors (65 and over) as well as volunteer work for organizations.

Women spend more time on care of household children than men

One major type of activity performed in the home is the care of children.[29] When respondents were asked to report the number of hours spent on unpaid child care in the household,[30] women generally reported a higher number of hours per week than men. In 2010, women spent an average of 50.1 hours per week on child care, more than double the average time (24.4 hours) spent by men (Table 6).

Table 6
Time spent on unpaid care of a child in the household, by working arrangement and age of youngest child, Canada, 2010

Working arrangement and age of youngest child	Women	Men
	average number of hours per week	
All women and men	**50.1**	**24.4** *
Working arrangement		
Respondent was working		
Dual earner couples; respondent working full-time	49.8	27.2 *
Dual earner couples; respondent working part-time	59.4	40.5 *
Single earner couples; respondent working	50.8	25.5 *
Lone parents; respondent working	26.9	12.0 *
Respondent was not working		
Single earner couples; respondent not working	81.3	36.9 *
Couples; neither partner working	59.5	36.3 E*
Lone parents; respondent not working	30.0	8.1 E*
Age of youngest child in the household		
0 to 4	67.5	30.2 *
5 to 14	37.7	19.7 *

* statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey 2010.

27. Further information on time use and the time spent on unpaid work can be found in: Statistics Canada. 2011. *General Social Survey – 2010: Overview of the Time Use of Canadians*. Catalogue no. 89-647-X. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-647-x/89-647-x2011001-eng.htm (accessed July 27,2011).
28. Further information on generational differences in paid and unpaid work can be found in : Katherine Marshall. 2011. "Generational change in paid and unpaid work". *Canadian Social Trends* no. 92. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-008-X. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2011002/article/11520-eng.htm (accessed July 27, 2011). This article contains information on trends across time that readers may also find of interest.
29. In this section, all references to care of a child or to child care refer to unpaid care of children who reside in the respondent's household.
30. Only respondents who had a household member aged 14 or less were asked about the amount of time they spent caring for a child in the household.

However, not all women spent the same amount of time on unpaid child care. Two important factors impacted the amount of time spent on unpaid child care: the household's paid working arrangements and the age of the youngest child.

Among women currently doing paid work, those who were lone parents spent the least amount of time caring for children—26.9 hours per week. Women who were the sole wage earner in a couple spent more time on child care—50.8 hours per week. A similar amount of time (49.8 hours per week) was spent on child care by women who were part of a dual-earner couple and worked full-time. If they worked part-time, women who were part of a dual-earner couple spent an average of 59.4 hours per week on unpaid child care.

Among women who were not doing paid work at the time of the survey, there were considerable differences according to the type of living arrangements. Lone parent women who were not working spent the least amount of time on household child care—30.0 hours per week. In comparison, women who were part of a couple in which neither partner was working at the time of the survey spent double that amount of time (59.5 hours per week). This may be explained in part by the older ages of children in the households of non-working lone parents, as older children tend to require less child care. The average age of the youngest child in lone parent non-working households was 7.9 years. In comparison, the average age of the youngest child in couple households where neither partner was working was 5.4 years.

Women who were part of a couple where the other partner was the sole wage earner spent the most time caring for household children—an average of 81.3 hours per week.

Indeed regardless of parental working arrangements, the age of the youngest child in the household was associated with the amount of time spent on child care. When the youngest child in the household was under age 5, women recorded, on average, 67.5 hours per week of child care and men reported about half that (30.2 hours). When the youngest child in the household was older, average weekly hours spent on child care declined for both sexes, although a gap remained between women and men. Women spent 37.7 hours on unpaid child care for children aged 5 to 14, compared with 19.7 hours for men.

Women do more domestic work than men

Besides care of children, unpaid work also includes everyday domestic chores such as housework, yard work and home maintenance. A gap between women and men was evident in the time spent on domestic work. While men reported spending, on average, 8.3 hours on unpaid domestic work, women spent more than one and a half times this amount—13.8 hours (Table 7).

Table 7
Time spent on household domestic work, by working arrangement, Canada, 2010

Working arrangement	Women	Men
	average number of hours per week	
All women and men	**13.8**	**8.3** *
Working arrangement		
Respondent was working		
Dual earner couples; respondent working full-time	13.9	8.6 *
Dual earner couples; respondent working part-time	21.0	11.8 *
Single earner couples; respondent working	15.2	8.8 *
Singles; respondent working	7.7	6.1 *
Respondent was not working		
Single earner couples; respondent not working	23.4	14.6 *
Couples; neither partner working	17.3	10.6 *
Singles; respondent not working	10.0	6.3 *

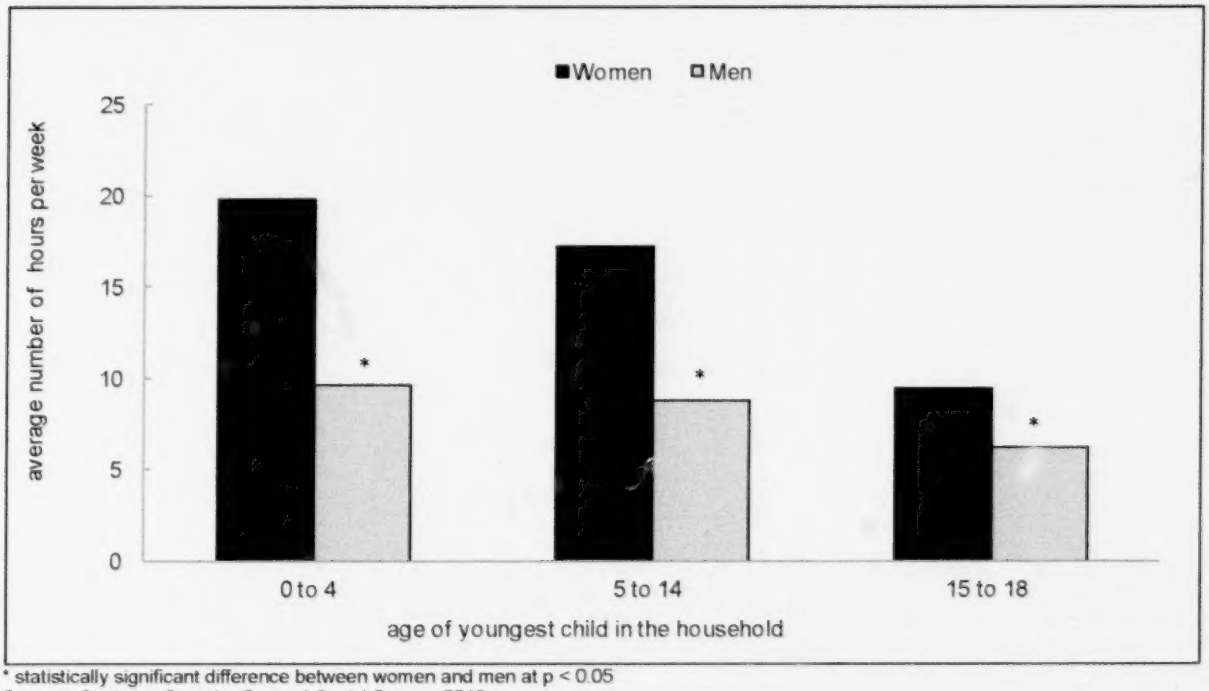
* statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2010.

Time spent on domestic work varied among women according to their working arrangements. Among women who were working at the time of the survey, those who were part of a dual-earner couple and worked part-time spent the most time on domestic work—an average of 21.0 hours per week. Less time was spent on domestic work by full-time working women who were part of a dual-earner couple (13.9 hours per week), or women who were the sole wage earner in a single-earner couple (15.2 hours per week). The least amount of time was spent by single working women. On average, they spent 7.7 hours per week on domestic work.

Among women who were not working at the time of the survey, those whose spouse or partner was the couple's sole wage earner spent the most time on domestic work—an average of 23.4 hours per week. Women in couples where neither spouse nor partner was working spent an average of 17.3 hours per week on domestic work, while non-working single women spent the least amount of time—an average of 10.0 hours per week.

When looking at families with children aged 18 and under in the household, it is apparent that the age of the youngest child impacts the amount of domestic work done in the household. As the age of the youngest child increased, the average hours of domestic work per week declined for both women and men. However, there was a consistent gender gap regarding hours spent on domestic work, with women spending more time. This gap narrowed noticeably when the youngest child in the household was between 15 and 18 years old (Chart 7).

Chart 7
Average number of hours per week of domestic work, by age of youngest child in the household, Canada, 2010



* statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2010.

Division of housework evolving between the sexes

During the past quarter century, the involvement of men and women in paid work and housework has changed. A study[1] comparing three generations of young people—the late baby boomers (born 1957 to 1966), Generation X (1969 to 1978) and Generation Y (1981 to 1990) found an increasing similarity in the involvement in paid work and housework between men and women from the late baby boomers to those in Generation Y.

Despite the narrowing of the differences, men continue to have an overall greater involvement in paid work than women, and a lesser involvement in housework.

For example, at ages 20 to 29, late baby boom men did on average 1.4 hours more paid work per day than women. In Generation Y, this difference had narrowed to 1.1 hours.

Late baby boom women, when they were aged 20 to 29, did 1.2 hours more housework per day than men. By the time Generation Y arrived at the same age group, the difference had narrowed to 0.4 hours. This was due entirely to a decrease in the time women spent on housework.

When looking only at dual-earner couples, the dominant family form since the 1980s, the study found that young adults are increasingly sharing economic and domestic responsibilities. As women have increased their hours of paid work, men have steadily increased their share of household work.

Women aged 20 to 29 in dual-earner couples in Generation Y did an average of 6.7 hours of paid work per day in 2010, up from 6.4 hours for their counterparts in Generation X.

On the other hand, dual-earner women in Generation Y did 53% of the total housework done by couples, down from 59% for their counterparts in Generation X.

Average daily time spent on paid work and housework by men and women in young dual-earner couples is more similar for those without children and particularly so for Generation Y.

However, for both Generation X and Y, with the presence of dependent children at home, the contribution of women to a couple's total paid work time declined while their contribution to housework increased.

About this study: Using a time diary method, this study asked respondents to report the average minutes on any given day spent on particular activities involved in housework.

Note:

1. Katherine Marshall. 2011. "Generational change in paid and unpaid work". *Canadian Social Trends* no. 92. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-008-X. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2011002/article/11520-eng.htm (accessed July 27, 2011).

Women spent more time caring for seniors

Beyond the realm of domestic work and caring for children, unpaid work may involve caring for seniors. In 2010, the General Social Survey showed that fewer than 3 percent of Canadians were providing care to a senior living in their household. Women and men did not differ in this regard. Care of seniors outside the household, however, was more common, provided by 14% of women and 9% of men (Table 8).

Women tended to spend more time caring for seniors than men. Forty-nine percent (49%) of women providing some care to a senior spent more than 10 hours per week on this activity compared with 25% of men. Of the women who provided care to a senior living outside the household, 11% spent more than 10 hours per week providing care compared with 7% of men.

Table 8
Women and men caring for a senior, by the senior's place of residence, Canada, 2010

Care of senior and place of residence	Women	Men
	percentage	
Provide care to a senior[1]		
Senior living in the household	2.8	2.4
Senior not living in the household	14.3	9.2 *
Spend more than 10 hours per week caring for a senior[2]		
Senior living in the household	48.9	25.0 *
Senior not living in the household	11.4	6.5 E*

* statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$

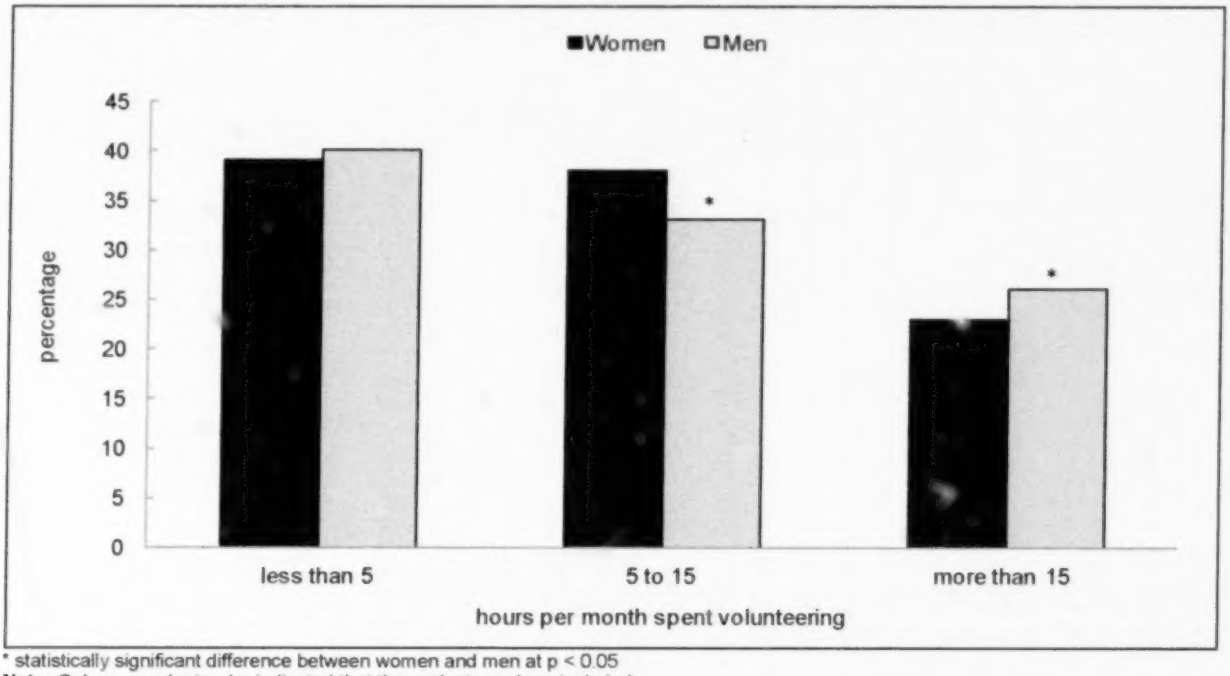
1. Respondents were classified as providing care to a senior if they did it for at least one hour per week
2. Only those who provide care to a senior are included

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2010.

Slightly more women volunteered than men

Volunteering for an organization can be another aspect of unpaid work. Compared with domestic household work and the unpaid care of children, time spent volunteering is more evenly divided between women and men. A slightly higher percentage of women than men reported doing unpaid volunteer work for an organization in the last year (40% compared with 36%). Among those who reported volunteering, there were small differences between women and men regarding the amount of time spent on this activity. Almost four in ten women who volunteered (38%) reported doing so for 5 to 15 hours per month, compared with one-third of men (33%). In comparison, slightly fewer women (23%) than men (26%) reported volunteering more than 15 hours per month (Chart 8).

Chart 8
Distribution of volunteers according to the time they spent volunteering, Canada, 2010



* statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$
Note: Only respondents who indicated that they volunteered are included.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2010.